

VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

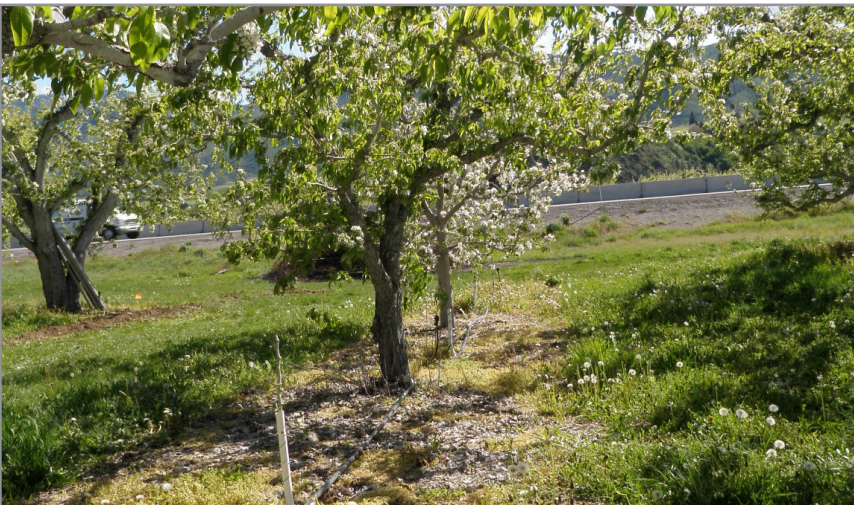
An alternative approach to protect critical areas and promote agriculture



Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM?

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an optional, incentive-based approach to protecting critical areas while promoting agriculture. The VSP is allowed under the Growth Management Act as an alternative to traditional approaches to critical areas protection, such as “no touch” buffers. Chelan County is one of 27 counties that has “opted in” to VSP, and developed an approved VSP work plan with a local Work Group.



Irrigation efficiencies to improve water quality, NRCS



Rangeland Habitat Replanting, NRCS



Icicle Creek Restoration Site, Chelan County Dept. of Natural Resources



Bald eagles, Chelan County PUD



Wetlands, Confluence State Park, Historylink.org



Potential Aquifer and Alluvial Soils, Wenatchee Basin Area, BERK 2014



Colockum Creek Road Washout, WSU Chelan-Douglas Extension



Malaga Mudslide, Komo News

WHAT ARE CRITICAL AREAS?

Critical areas include (1) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, (2) wetlands, (3) frequently flooded areas, (4) geologically hazardous areas, and (5) critical aquifer recharge areas used for potable water.

Note: See RCW 36.70A and WAC 365-190

HOW MUCH LAND IS IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY?

Land in farming equals approximately 27,600 acres, and rangeland equals about 44,600 acres, based on 2016 geographic information system mapping. The greatest area of intersection between agriculture and critical areas includes fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, geologically hazardous areas, and potential aquifers.

CHELAN VSP WORK GROUP

Chelan County, the Cascadia Conservation District (CCD), Chelan-Douglas Farm Bureau, and local producers and technical experts have formed a VSP Work Group. Their Work Plan was approved by the State Conservation Commission in April 2017. The Work Group can provide technical assistance such as our Stewardship Checklist to identify conservation practices you already have in place and others you might want to try to benefit your agricultural operation and protect critical areas.



Lake Chelan vineyard, cornichon.org

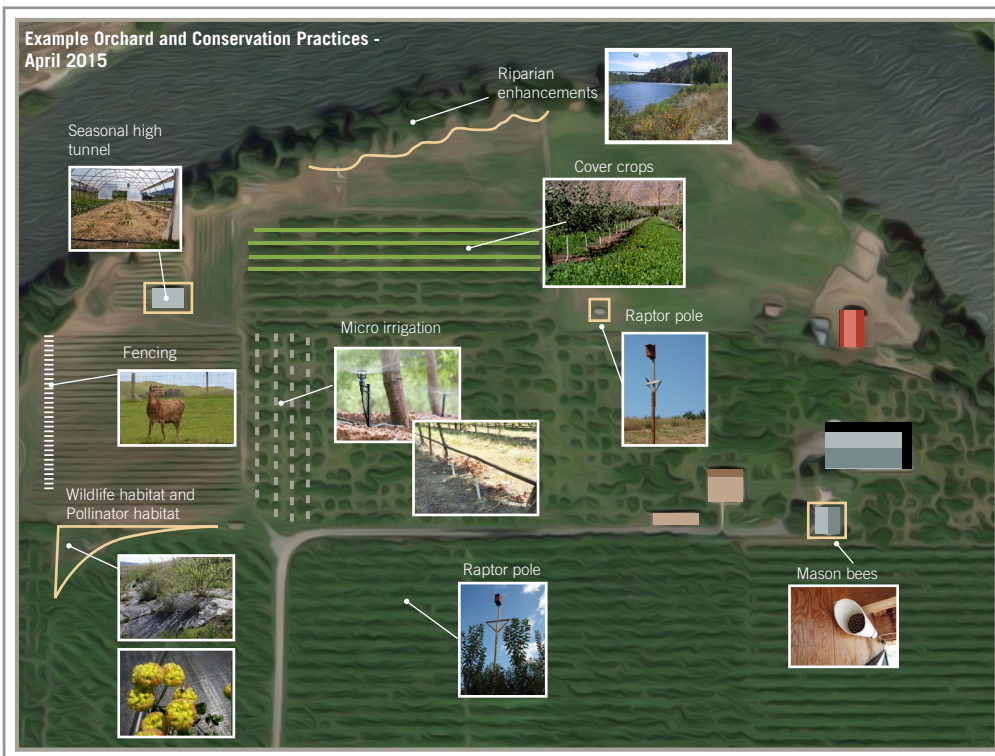
RECOGNIZING STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

Tree fruit production accounts for the vast majority of agriculture in the County. Local growers have a strong culture of improving agricultural practices that are beneficial to their business and protective of the environment. Examples of beneficial conservation practices include use of micro- and ground-level drip systems, integrated pest management, cover crops, mulching and soil management, installing raptor poles and bat boxes, installing plantings to attract pollinators, and installing plastic fencing to protect orchards and avoid mammal “hang ups”.

Photos: NRCS Wenatchee Field Office, CCRD, 2015



Apple orchard in Chelan County, WSU Extension



Why participate?

- Participation is voluntary.
- Gives landowners a chance to avoid unnecessary regulations.
- Recognizes conservation practices you already do and provides incentives for new practices.
- Enhances marketability of agricultural products and is designed to recognize other programs.
- Protects and enhances critical areas while maintaining and enhancing agricultural viability.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND FUNDING

Riparian Areas and Agriculture

Riparian vegetation along streams and rivers helps maintain clean air and water, supports fish and wildlife, controls pests, moderates temperatures, and reduces erosion. Conserving riparian area also supports farming such as through establishing plants that support pollinators and healthy soils and by reducing noxious weeds. We can provide technical assistance or funding to establish riparian areas.

Other Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Many improvements that growers make to their businesses also help conserve and protect fish and wildlife habitat. For example:

- Managing grazing to reduce erosion and protect riparian vegetation
- Installing microirrigation, solid set, or other irrigation conveyance, to improve water efficiencies
- Conservation crops, cover crops, and mulching to attract pollinators, improve soil moisture, reduce inputs, and conserve water

Contact us for technical assistance and cost shares for a range of conservation practices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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